2.2.3.7 Northeast Sands Ecological Landscape

Figure 2-21. Northeast Sands Ecological Landscape.

General Description

The Northeast Sands Ecological Landscape occupies a relatively narrow, vertical band of land in northeast Wisconsin (Figure 2-21). This Ecological Landscape, formed in glacial outwash sand plains (some of them pitted), has steep outcropping Precambrian bedrock knolls of basalt, rhyolite, or granite. Sandy ground moraines and end moraines are also interspersed in the landscape.

Vegetation

Historically, extensive oak/jack pine barrens and jack pine forests were found in the outwash sand portions of this Ecological Landscape. Moraines supported forests of hardwoods, red pine, and white pine. Outwash plains often contained pitted depressions, resulting in numerous wetlands and kettle lakes.

Most of this Ecological Landscape is still forested; aspen predominates, followed by northern hardwoods (Figure 2-22). Jack pine remains on the outwash plains along with northern pin oak. There are several important occurrences of jack pine/oak barren communities. A small percentage of this Ecological Landscape contains spruce-fir-cedar forest and lowland hardwood forest. The Brazeau Swamp is one of the best representations of large cedar swamp forests in northern Wisconsin.

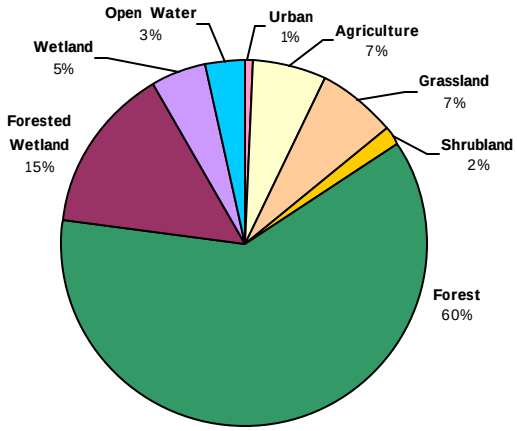

Figure 2-22. Current land cover in the Northeast Sands Ecological Landscape.

Hydrologic Features

The Northeast Sands contains several important river systems as well as extensive wetlands. The Menominee is the largest, located on the Michigan-Wisconsin border. Several wild rivers in Landscape are the Wolf, Pine, Popple, and Pike. The Upper Peshtigo River runs through the Landscape's center and includes the Caldron Falls Flowage and the High Falls Reservoir. Extensive wetlands, including the Peshtigo Brook State Wildlife Area, are found here. This Ecological Landscape has high levels of watershed pollution, according to Wisconsin DNR, with three of five watersheds classified as highly polluted. Its lakes, though few, ranked second worst in pollution levels among the Ecological Landscapes.

Land Use

The total land area of the Northeast Sands Ecological Landscape is approximately 987,000 acres, of which 77% is classified as timberland. About a third of the Ecological Landscape is publicly owned (Figure 2-23), mostly by counties.

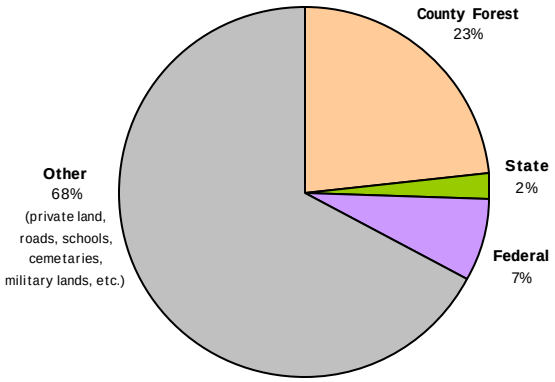

Figure 2-23. Public land ownership in the Northeast Sands Ecological Landscape.

Socioeconomics

Socioeconomic data are summarized based on county-level approximations of the Ecological Landscape (referred to as a "region"). Economic data are available only on a political unit basis with counties

as the smallest unit. The counties included in this socioeconomic region are Florence, Marinette, Menominee, and Oconto ("Northeast Sands Region").
The economy of the Northeast Sands Region is largely dependent on forest industry. The forest products and processing industries contribute 24% to the region's total industrial output. Compared with other regions, the Northeast Sands is not heavily agricultural or recreational. It has below-average percentages of acreage in farmland (only 14%) and acreage per farm, and it ranks below the mean in milk and corn production per acre. Note that farmland includes all land under farm ownership, such as cropland, pastureland, and woodland. Acreage in lakes and rivers is relatively low but has important recreation value. Although there are relatively few state parks, forests, recreation areas, or fishery and wildlife areas, a significant portion of the Nicolet National Forest is located within this region. Relatively little of the forested or agricultural land is sold or diverted to other uses. The region has a fairly low per capita water usage, with industrial needs accounting for over 50% of total water use.

The Northeast Sands Region is sparsely populated and has a somewhat elderly population. It has fewer African Americans than any other region, but the percentage of Native Americans is second highest. The area is economically depressed, with the second lowest per capita income, the highest rate of unemployment, and the second highest rate of adult poverty. The percentage of manufacturing jobs is the highest in this region, and the proportion of service jobs the lowest.

Management Opportunities

- Restoration of oak-pine barrens and bracken grasslands (Dunbar Barrens, Spread Eagle Barrens, Athelstane Barrens), and associated grassland/shrub birds.
- Maintenance of jack pine forests on outwash plains.
- Restoration and maintenance of areas proximal to outwash for restoration and management of white pine and red pine forests.
- Protection of unusual communities found on rock outcrops.
- Protection of cedar forests in Brazeau Swamp and elsewhere.
- Preservation and management of the Pine and Popple River corridors, and the Wolf River corridor.
- Preservation and management of the Menominee River corridor, including the adjoining rock outcrops and extensive forests within the corridor.
- Lake and wetland protection.
- Sustainable forest management and demonstration areas in the recently purchased Peshtigo River State Forest.

Natural Communities

The following table (2-9) lists the natural communities occurring in the Northeast Sands arranged by the level of opportunity to sustain and manage the community type in this Ecological Landscape. For further explanation of natural communities and opportunities to sustain them, see Section 3.3.

Table 2-9. Natural communities occurring in the Northeast Sands arranged by the level of opportunity to sustain and manage the natural community type in this Ecological Landscape.

Major Opportunity	Important Opportunity	Present
Northern Dry Forest	Northern Hardwood Swamp	Boreal Forest
Northern Dry-Mesic Forest	Northern Mesic Forest	Floodplain Forest
Northern Wet-Mesic Forest	Northern Wet Forest	Emergent Aquatic-Wild Rice
Pine Barrens	Emergent Aquatic	Ephemeral Pond
Bracken Grassland	Submergent Aquatic	Shrub Carr
	Alder Thicket	Inland Beach
	Boreal Rich Fen	
	Northern Sedge Meadow	
	Open Bog	
	Dry Cliff	
	Moist Cliff	